



Rydhave

The Residence of the United States
Ambassador to Denmark

Rydhave

"Rydhave," the residence of the United States' Ambassador to Denmark, stands out among the grand villas in the neighborhood of Skovshoved, a few miles north of Copenhagen along the scenic coastal road, Strandvejen. Perched high on a hill, overlooking the narrow strait Øresund, separating Denmark from Sweden, its stately white walls and steep slate roofs create a striking ensemble, further enhanced by the extensive grounds that frame the mansion.

Built in 1885 for E. Schnackenburg, a tile manufacturer, Rydhave was designed by architect Vilhelm Petersen (1851-1931) in the late-romantic style. Schnackenburg did not keep the house for long, and in 1900 it was purchased by the coal merchant Carl Drost, who sixteen years later sold it to Christian G. Hansen, the director of Denmark's leading grain company. Known affectionately as the "Patriarch," Hansen enlarged the house and embellished the gardens considerably and lived here with his family for more than twenty years.

Events took a more dramatic turn during World War II, when the property was bought by the German Foreign Ministry as a residence for Dr. Werner Best, the German High Commissioner in Nazi-occupied Denmark. His presence introduced a new regime at Rydhave, with heavily armed guards and busy military officers, such as Field Marshall Erwin Rommel who visited in December 1943. Concern for his own safety in the event of Allied air raids, led Best to construct a new wing and bomb shelter, and today this feature remains the only tangible trace of his unpopular residency.

After the war, with Best incarcerated and Rydhave confiscated by the Danish authorities, the newly arrived American Minister, Monnett B. Davis, leased the house. He soon, however, succumbed

to its real charm and began negotiations with the Danish Government to acquire it as an official residence. Eventually the sum of \$94,000 was agreed upon, but in effect the purchase price was defrayed by turning American war surplus materials, notably cloth, over to the Danish authorities. These were still days of scarcity and rationing.

Although subsequent Ambassadors have brought some changes to Rydhave's outward appearance and indoor amenities, the most dramatic alteration was the decision of Ambassador Robert Coe (1953-1957) to paint white the hitherto red brickwork of the façade. Today it would be hard to imagine Rydhave differently, so firmly established has its white glint become to neighbors and visitors alike.

Rydhave is not just an official residence but a reference point where private memories and public lives come effortlessly together. Over the years, each Ambassador has brought his or her own lifestyle, notions of comfort and privacy to the residence. Since September 2013, Rydhave has been home to Ambassador Rufus Gifford.

Since the days of Minister Davis, twenty-one Ambassadors have resided at Rydhave and countless guests and visitors have enjoyed the hospitality of the United States on these premises. The annual Fourth of July picnic on the immaculate lawns continues as a highly coveted event among the Embassy's many friends and contacts. Inside the house, guests are greeted by a series of large, elegant reception rooms, comfortably furnished and adorned with numerous examples of American and Danish artwork – creating the perfect environment in which to consider the New World point of view.

American Chiefs of Mission at Rydhave

Minister Monnett B. Davis (1945)
Ambassador Josiah Marvel, Jr. (1946-1949)
Ambassador Eugenie Anderson (1950-1953)
Ambassador Robert Coe (1953-1957)
Ambassador Val Peterson (1957-1960)
Ambassador William McCormick Blair, Jr. (1961-1964)
Ambassador Katherine E. White (1964-1968)
Ambassador Angier Biddle Duke (1968-1969)
Ambassador Guilford Dudley, Jr. (1969-1971)
Ambassador Fred J. Russell (1971-1972)
Ambassador Philip K. Growe (1973-1975)
Ambassador John G. Dean (1975-1978)
Ambassador Warren D. Manshel (1978-1981)
Ambassador John L. Loeb, Jr. (1981-1983)
Ambassador Terence A. Todman (1983-1989)
Ambassador Keith L. Brown (1989-1992)
Ambassador Richard B. Stone (1992-1993)
Ambassador Edward E. Elson (1993-1998)
Ambassador Richard N. Swett (1998-2001)
Ambassador Stuart A. Bernstein (2001-2005)
Ambassador James P. Cain (2005-2009)
Ambassador Laurie S. Fulton (2009-2013)
Ambassador J. Rufus Gifford (2014-

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